

X2

Proposed Changes to the Administrative Code 6A:16.2
Public Testimony Hearing – June 21, 2006

Good afternoon. May I take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to speak with you about the very important subject of having certified school nurses available to all children in our schools.

My name is Joy Laspata. I am the District Nurse for Monroe Twp. Public Schools in Williamstown, NJ. I have been a registered nurse for 32 years. I have earned a bachelor's degree and I hold a certificate in school nursing from the New Jersey Department of Education. I am an experienced practitioner in intensive care, cardiac care, and the hospital emergency room. I was certified in advanced cardiac life support and taught as a certified CPR instructor for the American Heart Association. I have performed CPR, defibrillated patients, and performed the Heimlich maneuver. I have assisted in delivering babies, served as a paramedic training coordinator, and have led medical evacuation situations for the National Park Service. My diverse background, like that of many other certified school nurses, serves me well in the school setting as I am the only trained medical person in the school building. I can respond efficiently to medical emergencies and attend to the medical needs that arise in the school population with regard to the medically fragile student as well as the general school population. The notion that CSNs are not qualified to provide these critical and extensive medical services is simply not true, and any person who alleges this is misinformed or intentionally misleading you.

Generally speaking, when people know better, they do better. Would you have a dermatologist perform cardiac surgery on you or your loved ones? Of course you wouldn't, because you know better. While both are doctors, each obviously has expertise in different specialized fields. The expected outcome is that you will receive appropriate and positive results with the right person performing the work. It is also logical to expect a deleterious or possibly fatal outcome with someone who is unskilled performing tasks outside of their purview. The specialized CSN brings much to the school above and beyond professional nursing skills. The State of New Jersey has mandated that school nurses earn a bachelors degree along with certification in school nursing. This expertise is a valuable tool and often makes the CSN a pivotal person in the resolution of problems that impact on the children in our schools. The educational setting requires all staff members to be knowledgeable in educational modalities so as to create an advantageous learning environment. Without the considerable knowledge of educational professionals, the registered nurse without a school nurse certificate is prepared to handle only half of what this job requires.

Beyond contributing to a positive learning environment, CSNs are additionally prepared with the knowledge to meet the New Jersey Administrative Codes. The CSN performs mandated screenings and provides services to students with

special needs all in the context of promoting optimal learning conditions. The CSN is knowledgeable in developing and facilitating accommodations with regard to the medical needs of the students within the state criteria. The CSN is integral in medication timing and interventions so students can maximize on learning schedules and physical exercise participation. In addition, the CSN provides educational information to students and staff so as to provide infectious disease control and impart other situationally appropriate medical information. Being trained in the profession of teaching, the CSN can effectively communicate the necessary knowledge to a wide range of age groups in appropriate and effective teaching strategies. Additionally, trained in the area of public health, the CSN keeps the students and staff in compliance with the mandated immunization requirements set forth by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

The department of education has identified knowledge needed for the nurses to interface effectively with the other educational professionals in the school setting. By earning a Certified School Nurse Certificate, they possess the qualities exemplifying effective productive school staff. It has been said that much can be learned about a society by how it treats its old and how it treat its young. I find it unconscionable that chief school administrators trusted with leading our schools would petition you to lower the standards of key staff. I just can't believe that anyone would want to be responsible for providing inferior care to our most precious of resources, our future, our children. I'm confident that now that we know better we will do better by continuing to mandate that our students merit Certified School Nurses.

Respectfully,

Joy Laspata RN, BA, CSN
Monroe Township Public Schools
75 E. Academy Street
Williamstown, NJ 08094
856-629-6400, Ext. 1003